

# THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 89

NO. 9

NOVEMBER 2004

FOUNDED 1917

## Join the 104th Christmas Bird Count

**S**ign up now to participate in Golden Gate Audubon's 2004 Christmas Bird Counts, which will take place in Oakland on Sunday, December 19, and in San Francisco on Tuesday, December 28. Join your friends for this annual bird counting event, capped off by a hearty and delicious dinner where we will report results from the field and hear what other birders found.

Invitations to the two counts have been mailed to everyone who participated in a count in recent years. Count organizer Dave Quady urges everyone to fill out their invitations and mail them immediately. "Early sign-ups help the count compilers ensure that every area is well covered," Dave says. "And all birders are welcome, no matter what their experience level."

This season marks the 104th year of Christmas Bird Counts. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, Christmas Bird Counts attempt to identify and count bird species within a defined 15-mile diameter circle during one calendar day. Last year, more than 1,800 counts were held nationwide, including over 100 in California alone, with more than 50,000 participants. The results of all counts since 1900 can be viewed on the National Audubon Society website at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr). The counts provide a wealth of information about changes in resident bird populations, for use by researchers and bird-watchers alike.

The Oakland count circle extends from Treasure Island northeast to the San Pablo Reservoir in Contra Costa County, and south to St. Mary's College in Moraga and the Oakland International Airport. With its wide variety of habitats, the Oakland count typically produces more than 170 bird species.

The San Francisco count circle includes the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge, all of San Francisco, and down the peninsula to San Bruno Mountain and the wetlands



A Red Tailed Hawk sits on a perch on Strawberry Hill at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park.

Lee Kamey

BIRD COUNT, continued on page 11

## Yosemite Slough: Audubon and Youth

**I**n the June 2004 issue of *The GULL*, we introduced the Yosemite Slough Watershed Restoration Project, a collaboration of seven environmental, educational and local community groups working to improve the Yosemite Slough watershed, which enters the Bay between Candlestick Point SRA and the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in the Bayview-Hunters Point area of San Francisco. As part of this collaborative, Golden Gate Audubon performed a wildlife survey of the South Basin shoreline from January 2003 to April 2004.

Golden Gate Audubon worked with 20 Bayview-Hunters Point high school students to perform this survey. These youths were smart, enthusiastic and fast-learning, and they wowed us with their energy and insight. Literacy for Environmental Justice, an environmental education organization and member of the restoration project, hired and managed the youths, who were paid salaries above minimum wage.

For more than a year, a team of Golden Gate Audubon census leaders—all experienced birders and naturalists—spent two Saturdays a month leading the youths in surveying the Candlestick Point Recreation Area/South Basin shoreline and uplands for birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. The leaders and their alternates were J.R. Blair, Andrew Rush, Gernot Huber, Betsy Berberian, Martha Wessitsh, and Simone Whitecloud. Steve Granholm and Tim

YOSEMITE SLOUGH, continued on page 12

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## ROSTER

### ELECTED DIRECTORS

Miles McKey ('05)	President
Al Peters ('07)	Treasurer
Jacqui Smalley ('06)	Secretary
John Luther ('05)	
Allan Ridley ('05)	Education
Bob Bennett ('06)	San Francisco Conservation
Anne McTavish ('06)	Programs
Jacqui Smalley ('06)	Development, Board Devpmt.
Marjorie Blackwell ('07)	Publications/Publicity
Autumn Garrett ('07)	Membership

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Kevin Consey	Finance
Pat Eckhardt	East Bay Conservation
Leora Feeney	FAWR
Susan Groves	Field Trips
Bob Risebrough	Latin America
Sylvia Stone	Human Resources

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX**  
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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. Monthly meeting: second Friday in the West Bay; third Thursday in the East Bay, 7 p.m.

*The Gull* is published each month except July and August by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The Post Office does not forward *The Gull*.

The *Gull* deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication.

The *Gull* - ISSN 0164-971X

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Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday 9-12, 1-4 (call first)

Design and layout  
e.g. communications



Printed with vegetable-based inks  
On Processed Chlorine-free paper  
80% post-Consumer Waste content

# Coming Together to Protect Urban Habitats

**I**n June, Miles McKey and I attended the second meeting of the Audubon Urban Chapter Network (AUCN)—a peer network of urban chapters seeking to be a voice for common concerns and to foster strong urban chapters. AUCN participants believe that Audubon chapters can be one of the most effective forces in on-the-ground conservation, environmental education and recreational bird-watching in their communities.

New York City Audubon hosted this meeting, which included leaders from eight chapters from around the country. We spent three days sharing strategies and brainstorming solutions to issues ranging from membership to “green investing.” As we focused on common challenges in urban wildlife conservation from the skyscraper that is home to New York City Audubon, I was struck by the tremendous similarity of our concerns. From riparian-area restoration efforts to shaping city policies to include wildlife, we are all tackling the same root issues.

Our discussion gave me a fresh sense of the importance of our work—whether we are saving large areas of land, such as Gateway Valley, or working with our neighbors in the heart of the city to carve out a small place for wildlife. Especially in the wilderness-rich state of California, it is easy to forget just how important these urban habitats are. The habitats we conserve may be important for bird populations within our cities, such as the California Quail, or may sustain the many birds that migrate through San Francisco Bay each year. Urban habitats may be absolutely vital to the health of a species—such as the California Least Terns at the Alameda Refuge.

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the world's urban population will surpass its rural population in 2005, when some three billion people will live in urban centers. While it may be tempting to believe that it is “too late” to save habitats in swelling cities, this statistic challenges us to see the importance of urban habitats more clearly. Urban habitats continue to provide important areas for a variety of wildlife, from butterflies to songbirds to raptors, as they inspire people to appreciate the wildlife they shelter.

This is equally evident in New York and San Francisco. At Jamaica Bay Refuge in Queens, nesting osprey feed their young against the backdrop of Manhattan's towers of concrete. And in Central Park, we watched Pale Male—the Park's famed resident Red-Tailed Hawk—soar over the park and alight atop his nest on a 5th-Avenue building. As our group stood in rapt appreciation of this most urban bird, a young girl approached and asked to borrow a pair of binoculars. She had come to the park specifically to see Pale Male, her mother explained. She had studied him in depth and knew all the facts; even our offers to help her adjust her binoculars were politely declined. She was already a pro—part of a passionate new generation who will want to ensure there is a place for wildlife in our cities as well as in the wild.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

## Nomination of Members to Board of Directors

Attention: all members who wish to nominate candidates for next year's slate of directors: Golden Gate Audubon's bylaws require the submission of petitions for candidacy either to the Board President or Board Development Chairperson at least 12 weeks prior to elections. In 2005, the deadline will fall in mid-February. A specific deadline and guidelines for submission of nominating petitions will be printed in the December GULL.

We also solicit your suggestions for potential Board members. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining the Board, please submit your comments to the Board Development Committee.

# Join Us for the 2004 Restore-A-Thon

**P**lease join us on Saturday, November 13 for Golden Gate Audubon's second annual Restore-A-Thon. Building on last year's successful Quail Restore-A-Thon in San Francisco, this year we are adding the Alameda Wildlife Refuge to our work sites for wildlife habitat restoration. You can participate by sponsoring a volunteer, asking friends and family to sponsor you, or by sponsoring yourself as a volunteer.

This year's Restore-A-Thon focuses on two of GGA's most exciting efforts: restoring healthy populations of California Quail in San Francisco and protecting the northernmost population of endangered California Least Terns at the proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge. Restore-A-Thon volunteers will plant more than 1,000 quail-friendly plants at Harding Park and the Presidio in San Francisco and remove thousands of weeds from the least terns' nesting site in Alameda.

The Restore-A-Thon also celebrates the presence of wildlife in the Bay Area—even in the most urban locations. Working in part-

nership with the San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks, The Presidio Trust and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, GGA and its volunteers will be enhancing the very urban habitats that support these native birds and other wildlife, helping to conserve our rich, local wildlife heritage.

Sponsors whose donations total \$20 or more and all volunteers who obtain pledges will earn special GGA tee-shirts illustrated by artist Alan Hopkins. The top three volunteers who bring in the highest total sponsorships and the top three individual donors will receive special gifts in appreciation. All funds raised by the Restore-A-Thon will go toward GGA's efforts to save the California Quail and Least Tern.

## How You Can Help

To register or make a donation, please complete the form below. For more information and sponsorship forms, call the GGA office at 510.843.2222, or check our Web site: [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org). We will send you a sponsor package that includes helpful hints on how to approach sponsors.

## Sign up now for Audubon Assembly

Audubon members are invited to attend the Audubon California Assembly on Wednesday and Thursday, November 17 and 18, at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton. Centered on the theme "Building Constituencies for Bird Conservation," the statewide meeting is a chance for Audubon activists, chapter leaders and members to decide Audubon legislative priorities for the coming year. Registration is \$130 for two days, including meals and workshops. Radisson Hotel reservations are \$79 per night.

Workshop topics include: how to save an Important Bird Area, fundraising, the legislative process, innovative education programs, and grassroots conservation. We'll also watch the fly-in of sandhill cranes and see other birds and wildlife on a special field trip to the Isenberg Crane Reserve before sunset.

For information, contact Yolanda Adra of Audubon California at [yadra@audubon.org](mailto:yadra@audubon.org) or 310.268.0805, or Elizabeth Murdock at Golden Gate Audubon. Please let us know if you plan to attend.

## 2004 Golden Gate Audubon Restore-A-Thon

Saturday, November 13, 2004 • 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

- ☐ **Yes!** I will help restore Quail and Least Tern habitats by participating in the Restore-A-Thon.
- ☐ I will sponsor the Golden Gate Audubon volunteer team at \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per hour of work for 3 hours.  
(Suggested minimum pledge rate: \$7–10 per hour)
- ☐ I will sponsor myself at \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per hour.
- ☐ I have donated \$20 or more and would like to receive a t-shirt. Please circle your size. **S M L XL**
- ☐ I would like to join a work party at: ☐ Harding Park ☐ The Presidio ☐ Alameda ☐ Please choose a site for me.
- ☐ Please send me a pledge form and information packet so I may raise additional pledges from friends and family.
- ☐ I can't participate in the Restore-A-Thon but want to help! Enclosed is a check to **Golden Gate Audubon Society** for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

**Golden Gate Audubon Society**  
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G  
Berkeley, CA 94702

Please return by November 10  
or call Golden Gate Audubon at  
510.843.2222

# Welcome New Board Members

**W**e are delighted to welcome two new members to the Golden Gate Audubon Board. Both Pat Eckhardt and Sylvia Stone are committed conservationists who bring wonderful enthusiasm and new energy and insights to our Board. Welcome, Pat and Sylvia!

## Patricia Eckhardt

Pat Eckhardt has been an Audubon member for many years and served on Golden Gate Audubon's East Bay Conservation Committee for three years before being named



Pat Eckhardt

chair of the committee and a designated director of the Golden Gate Audubon Board in June 2004. She also serves on the Development Committee, which is responsible for fund raising and donor campaigns.

From 2001-02, Pat represented Golden Gate Audubon on a technical committee advising the Water Transit Authority (WTA) on its plans to expand ferry service on San Francisco Bay. She advised the WTA that a ferry terminal on the Berkeley waterfront would have significant impact on birds and other wildlife in Eastshore State Park, due to parking lots and increased traffic adja-

cent to the terminal. She also noted the required dredging would impact water birds near the terminal site and that operation of the ferries needed more study to evaluate their effect on rafting ducks.

Pat holds degrees in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin and in civil engineering from the University of Arizona. She was a Professional Engineer with PG&E, San Francisco, for 22 years until her recent retirement. Much of her tenure with PG&E was spent ensuring the company's compliance with federal and state water quality regulations.

In addition to devoting time to Golden Gate Audubon activities, Pat is an active volunteer and docent with the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park.

## Sylvia Stone

Sylvia Stone joined the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in 2001. WCS, an international nonprofit organization, is headquartered at the Bronx Zoo in New York City. She served as Program Coordinator for the Living Landscapes Program, which develops wildlife-based strategies and analytical tools for



Sylvia Stone

conservation planning, implementation, and monitoring around the world. In 2003, Sylvia moved to the Bay Area to become a Program Manager for the North America Program, overseeing a research team working on Sudden Oak Death.

Relocating to California was a homecoming. Sylvia received her undergraduate degree in Conservation and Resource Studies from the UC Berkeley, then worked at UC Davis and other local organizations, such as the Seacology Foundation. She went on to earn an M.E.S. in Conservation and Development from the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University in 2000. "I chose to return to the Bay Area not only because of its beauty," she says, "but because I missed the feeling of being part of a greater community."

The community, and our board, will clearly benefit from Sylvia's extensive skills in conservation, natural resource management and strategic planning. "Joining the Golden Gate Audubon board is exciting," she says, "because I am impressed by GGA's history as a grassroots, people-centered organization with a mission to protect our shared environment. Working for the conservation of wildlife species and their habitat in such a special place, together with fellow residents, is very meaningful to me."

## Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education and member activities!

### Golden Eagle (\$1000 or more)

Anonymous (*Strategic Planning*)

### Peregrine Falcon (\$500 to \$999)

Carl & Carol S. Maes (*Australia trip*)

### Least Tern (\$200 to \$499)

Leora Feeney (*FAWR*), Michael & Elizabeth Mooney (with matching gift from Capital Group Companies), Franklin Silver

### Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$199)

Scott Benson, Hugh Cotter, Theresa & Richard Horrigan, Caroline H. Kim & Bruce DeBenedictis, Sandra LaFramboise & Michael Marken, Helen McKinley, Catherine S. Muther, Marilyn Nasatir, Mary T. Parkison, Deborah W. Trotter

### Gifts (to \$99)

Susanna Bensinger, Bernice Biggs, Donald Bird & David N. Young, Prof. Judith P. Breen, Ms. Bei Brown, Dr. Richard S. Cooper, Patricia Z. Covert (*Save the Quail*), Reba Davis, Ruth M. Doty, J. Julian Elliot, Norman C. Frank, Richard A. Gale (*Save the Quail*), Autumn N. Garrett & Andreas Meisel (*Save the Quail*), Rebecca Gertmenian & Fred Spitz (*Save the Quail*), Larry G. Gestra, Dorothy D. Gregor (*Save the Quail*), Sean Gunn, Madelon Halpern (*Birdbox*), Frank Hand (*Save the Quail*), J. Michael Hatch, Roy Henrickson, Elizabeth A. Hook, Hazel H. Houston, Bruce & Jeannette Howard, H. Nona Hungate, Janet S. Jacobsen, Barbara Job, Nancy B. Kenyon, Arlene V. H. Lee, Jean A. & Ernest G. Lucken, Joy K. Maxion, Mikiye Nakanishi (*Save the Quail*), Richard A. Navarro (*Save the Quail*), Roberta S. O'Grady (*Save the Quail*), Elizabeth A. Payton, Courtenay A. Peddle (*Birdbox*), Susan Peters (*Save the Quail*), Cora Pitcock (*Save the Quail*), Dee S. Pruyn, Don Reinberg, Ivan Samuels, Mary E. Schaefer, Edward V. Stackpoole, Janis L. Sutchter, John H. Sutter, Linda & Randy Swanson,

Dolores S. Taller, Phoebe A. Tanner, Janie Whitley, Florine I. Williamson

### In Memory of

Miles Thomas McKey, son of Miles R. McKey, Board President: Kathryn Blake, Bob & Mary Stewart, Board & staff of Golden Gate Audubon Society

Mary Louise Rosegay: Harold Rosegay (*Save the Quail*), Nicki A. & Thomas F. Spillane

Evelyn Schwab: Warren M. & Karen Bird, In Honor of Two Avid and Skilled Birders

### In-Kind

Marj Blackwell: Computer Station

East Bay Regional Park District: 10 pairs Binoculars for Latin America Committee

Dorothy Gregor: Snowy owl print

Travis H. Hails: 14 Birding Books

## PROGRAMS

Anne McTavish



Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. We meet socially at 7 p.m. For more information about upcoming events, detailed directions or updates, please see our web page.

[www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2003-2004.htm](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org/Chapter/programs2003-2004.htm)

### Sights & Sounds of Kenya

San Francisco

Friday, November 12

Peter Headland

Peter Headland, a Bay-Area resident, will share slides and sound recordings from a recent trip to Kenya. His presentation focuses primarily on birds, but also includes photos of African mammals and their habitat. Mr. Headland has previously shared his "Sights and Sounds of Kenya" with audiences at Sequoia Audubon and will share this presentation in Berkeley on February 17.

County Fair building, Strybing Arboretum,

Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way

Directions: [www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html](http://www.strybing.org/visiting/page2.html)

### On the Wing with Alan Tennant

Berkeley

Thursday, November 18

Alan Tennant

Author Alan Tennant will speak about his new book, *On the Wing: To the Edge of the Earth with the Peregrine Falcon*. Two decades ago, Tennant set out in a battered Cessna piloted by a septuagenarian stunt-pilot to

radio-track the transcontinental migration of the Peregrine Falcon, a journey that took them from the Arctic to the Caribbean. *On the Wing* chronicles this fascinating journey in their quest to be the first to follow a falcon for the entirety of its global trek.

Tennant, an authority on raptors, reptiles, and the ecology of deserts and coral reefs, has won awards for his books. Active in wildlife conservation and rehabilitation, he has worked for the Raptor Preservation Fund, and Bat Conservation International. He also served as a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Arctic Peregrine Falcon Expedition.

This program will be the second time Mr. Tennant has addressed Golden Gate Audubon audiences, following his wonderful September presentation in San Francisco, which was hosted and co-sponsored by the Mechanics' Institute Library. We hope you won't miss this additional opportunity to hear him speak. Copies of *On the Wing* will be available for purchase at the program. Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: [www.northbrae.org/directions.html](http://www.northbrae.org/directions.html)

## Art Show: Global Diversity in Water Color

Golden Gate Audubon member and award-winning local artist Rita Sklar presents a show of new paintings at the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) Gallery in downtown Oakland. The show runs from October 13 through December 2, 2004.

Rita Sklar, who lives and paints in Oakland, is a member of the California Watercolor Association and an avid birder. Her awards include a special prize from The San Francisco Flyway Festival for her "Winged Migration in Black and White."

Her current show, "Global Diversity in Watercolor," features American, European and African birds and other wildlife. Critics describe her paintings as a mix of abstraction and realism, giving the paintings a feeling of movement and immediacy and praise this show as "capturing the subtle mood of the mystery of nature."

You can see Rita Sklar's paintings at the EBMUD Gallery, 375 11th Street, in downtown Oakland. The gallery is open during regular business hours. For a preview, visit her website at [www.ritasklar.com](http://www.ritasklar.com).

## Fall Birding Classes in San Francisco

Evening classes taught by Joe Morlan and endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon will meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. in room 307, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay Street, in San Francisco (free parking is provided in the school lot off Bay Street on the east side of the building). The instructor may arrange optional field trips on weekends.

Bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them. Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, fourth edition, by the National Geographic Society. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II and III.

Fees are \$115 for each 7-week course; \$100 for EA115 and EA120, which are 6 weeks; and \$90 for EA125, which is 5 weeks. Preregistration is strongly advised. For further information call 415.561.1860 or visit the instructor's website: <http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/fall04.htm>.

Joe Morlan, coauthor of *Birds of San Francisco and the Bay Area* and *Birds of Northern California*, is also coordinator of the recorded Northern California Birdbox sponsored by GGA.

**Field Ornithology I.** Introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior. Tuesdays.

Part B (EA105): Nov. 2 – Dec. 14

**Field Ornithology II.** In-depth study of the identification and status of North American land birds, including sparrows, juncos, longspurs, buntings and cardinals. Wednesdays.

Part B (EA115): Nov. 3 – Dec. 15

**Field Ornithology III.** A continuing study of North American waterbirds including snipe, phalaropes, skuas, jaegers, and gulls. Thursdays.

Part B (EA125): Nov. 4 – Dec. 16

# FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



## Sausalito to Larkspur via Richardson Bay and Corte Madera Marsh Bike & Bird Trip

*Marin County*

**Saturday, November 6**

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233  
(no calls after 9 pm), call for cell number,  
kathy\_jarrett@yahoo.com

We expect to see shore birds and ducks on the marsh and bay. We will ride mainly on trails and roads with bicycle lanes. Bring lunch and liquids and dress for cool, windy weather. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. All levels of birders welcome.

Bicycle trip starting from Golden Gate Ferry Terminal in SF/Sausalito. (If arriving by car, there is a Park and Ride lot at the north end of Sausalito at the intersection of Hwys 1 and 101). Ferry leaves SF Ferry Bldg at 10:40 arr Sausalito 11:10. Return from Larkspur at 3:30 arr SF Ferry Bldg 4:20. If you park in Sausalito, you will have to return from Larkspur independently. SF Ferry Bldg is at the foot of Market St. Leader arr from East Bay via BART, dep Rockridge at 9:50, MacArthur at 9:54, arr Embarcadero in SF at 10:09. View ferry and BART schedules online at [www.transitinfo.org](http://www.transitinfo.org) Remember to check Saturday schedules. Bay Trail info online at [baytrail.abag.ca.gov](http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov).



## Birding for Children

*San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum*

**Saturday, November 6**

Co-leaders: Angie Geiger & Nancy DeStefanis, San Francisco Nature Education, Darin Dawson, San Francisco Botanical Garden Docent. SFNE 415.387.9160; [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org)

Meet at 10 a.m. for this free trip at the Kiosk/Bookstore near the main gate of the SF Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way. Trip ends at 12 p.m. This birding tour and nature hike winds its way through the exciting microhabitats of the Gardens. Ages 7 to 14. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring binoculars and a pencil.

Co-sponsored by SF Nature Education, San Francisco Botanical Garden & GGA.

## Strybing Arboretum

*San Francisco*

**Sundays, November 7 and December 5**

Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna  
415.566.3241

Meet at 8 a.m. for this regular first Sunday of the month half-day trip. Beginners and all others welcome. Meet at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way). See September *GULL* for details.

## Aquatic Park

*San Francisco*

**Sunday, November 7**

Leader: SF Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser 415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the foot of the Hyde Street Pier (Hyde & Jefferson) for this two-hour beginners bird walk. Discover birds next door to the urban environment. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

## Arrowhead Marsh

*Alameda County*

**Wednesday, November 10**

Leader: Courtenay Peddle, 510.532.8911  
(no calls before 9 am), [capeddle@there.net](mailto:capeddle@there.net)

Meet at the Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at 9:30 a.m. Bring scope if you have one. See September *GULL* for details.

## Ohlone Greenway Work Party

*Albany*

**Saturday, November 13**

Leader: Jeffrey Black 510.526.7068

This will be the first of a series of morning get-togethers to improve the habitat for bird diversity and beautify the Greenway under and adjacent to the overhead BART tracks. We will meet at 9:30 a.m. at the intersec-

tion of Masonic Ave. and Dartmouth St., one block south of the Albany library. Please bring gloves and gardening tools. We will be weeding, enriching the soil, and planting. Expect to end by 12:30. Refreshments will be available. Heavy rain cancels. This is a "feel good" project and we look forward to a fun morning.

## Birding Western San Francisco On Foot

**Sunday, November 14**

Leader: David Armstrong  
415.305.7681, [darmstrong99@yahoo.com](mailto:darmstrong99@yahoo.com)

Meet at 8 a.m. A walking tour of Sutro Heights Park and western Golden Gate Park. We will be covering up to 6 miles of mostly flat terrain (with a climb at the end) on both paved and unpaved trails. Trip finishes around 1 p.m. Please wear good walking shoes, and bring a snack and water. Rain cancels. Meet on Merrie Way, the parking lot up the hill from Cliff House.

## Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds

*Marin County*

**Saturday, November 20**

Leader: Bob Power, 510.482.9601,  
[rcpower@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rcpower@sbcglobal.net)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot for this half-day trip. We'll see a variety of water birds, raptors and more. Bring sturdy walking shoes, layers, liquids and snacks. Beginners welcome.

Take 101 north and exit at Lucas Valley Dr. Go east on Smith Ranch Rd. to the end. Take a sharp left to the sewage treatment ponds, just before the county park. Drive past the headquarters to the parking lot on the left.

## Redwood Shores-Foster City Bicycle Trip

*San Mateo County*

**Saturday, November 20**

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233  
(no calls after 9pm), call for cell number,  
kathy\_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot of the Belmont Sports Complex in Belmont. We should find winter visitors and shore and water birds on the bay, lagoons, lakes and

sewer ponds. This circuit of Redwood Shores and Foster City is a flat 20 mile loop on the Bay Trail and other bike paths, mostly paved, some on bike lanes on city streets. (Add 3 mi. if arriving by train.) Trip continues to mid-afternoon. Participants have the option of doing only the Redwood Shores loop and returning independently. Bicycle helmet required. Dress in layers and bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels. All levels of birders welcome.

Note: Leader using BART and Caltrain. Will lv. Rockridge BART 7:10, MacArthur 7:14, Embarcadero 7:30, arr. Millbrae 8:12. Take bicycle up in elevator, purchase Caltrain round trip ticket to/from Belmont. Take bicycle down (different) elevator to west side of Caltrain tracks to await southbound train arr 8:24. You will need to lift your bike up the steps into the train. Northernmost car (rear of train) reserved for bicycles. Train arr Belmont 8:43. Alternatively, board train dep 8:00 from Caltrain station at 4th & King in SF. Train riders assemble at Belmont train station. We will bicycle on city streets and on the sidewalk across the freeway to the Belmont Sports Complex. Caltrain is on an hourly schedule. A northbound train dep Belmont at 2:48 p.m., arr Millbrae 3:08 and SF 3:36. BART is on a 20 min. schedule. Pittsburg/Bay Point train lvs Millbrae at 3:39, arr Embarcadero 4:18, MacArthur 4:36 and Rockridge 4:39. By car: from Hwy 101 in Belmont (south of Hwy 92 and the San Mateo bridge) exit at Ralston/Marine Pkwy and go east toward the bay .4 mi, left on Oracle Pkwy approx. .1 mi, left on Shoreway which becomes Island Pkwy and left into the Belmont Sports Complex parking lot in .4 mi. View Caltrain and BART schedules online at [www.transitinfo.org](http://www.transitinfo.org). Remember to check Saturday schedules. Bay Trail info at [baytrail.abag.ca.gov](http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov)



## Biking and Birding the Alameda Creek Regional Trail

*Union City Area*

**Sunday, November 21**

Leader: Jeffrey Black 510.526.7068

Meet 9:45 a.m. at the ticket machines at the Union City BART station. Our destination is Coyote Hills Regional Park where we shall view wintering ducks and shorebirds. About 18 miles round trip with a few brief hills; helmets required. Bring lunch, liquids, and layered clothing. Rain cancels.

Directions by car: take Hwy 880 south to Decoto Rd. exit, and go east on Decoto Rd. to the BART station.



## Arrowhead Marsh

*Alameda County*

**Sunday, November 21**

Co-leaders: Pamela Llewellyn  
925.413.8329,  
[seacreature219@sbcglobal.net](mailto:seacreature219@sbcglobal.net);  
Michael Butler 510.684.3375,  
[mjbkl@earthlink.net](mailto:mjbkl@earthlink.net)

Meet at 9 a.m. We will walk along the water's edge looking for shorebirds, ducks, raptors, Clapper rail and passerines. Beginners welcome.

From Berkeley take 880 south and exit at Hegenberger Rd. Turn right onto Hegenberger and right on Edgewater. We will congregate at the East Bay Regional Parks Garretson Point parking lot at the end of Edgewater.

## Coyote Hills Regional Park

*Fremont*

**Saturday, November 27**

Leader: Anne Hoff 510.845.5908,  
[anne2210b@cs.com](mailto:anne2210b@cs.com)

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Visitor Center parking lot for this half day trip. We will bird the varied habitats of this jewel of a park looking for wintering waterfowl, waders, and songbirds. We may also have a nice assortment of raptors. Bring liquids. Beginners welcome.

From the East Bay take I-880 south to 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north one mile, left on Patterson Ranch Rd. to Coyote Hills. Heavy rain cancels.

[\$]

## Pt. Reyes National Seashore

*Marin County*

**Sunday, November 28**

Leader: Rusty Scalf 510.666-9936,  
[rscalf@jps.net](mailto:rscalf@jps.net)

Meet at Five Brooks Pond at 8:30 a.m. We will also bird Olema Marsh, the Visitor's

Center and Limantour. We will bird until 3 p.m. Bring lunch and liquids.

Five Brooks Pond is just south of Olema on Shoreline Hwy/Rte.1. It is marked by a sign.

## Gray Lodge & Sacramento Wildlife Refuges

*Sutter, Butte and Glenn Counties*

**Saturday and Sunday, December 4 & 5**

Leaders: Steve and Renee Margolin  
530.342.6476

We will look for wintering geese (four species), Tundra Swans, ducks, raptors and Sandhill Cranes. Bring lunch, snacks, liquids, scopes and clothes appropriate for the Sacramento Valley in December (cold, with wind and rain always possible). Heavy rain cancels. Join us for one or both days.

Meet Saturday 9 a.m. in lot #14 at Gray Lodge. Drive east on I-80 15 miles beyond Davis to Route 99 exit. Go north 52 miles on Route 99 to the town of Gridley. Turn left (west) on Sycamore, which becomes Colusa Hwy; continue 5 miles to Pennington Rd. Turn left and follow signs to Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge. Or, take Highway 99 to Live Oak (just south of Gridley). In Live Oak, go west on Pennington Rd. and follow it west and then north (where it may be called Almond Orchard Rd. briefly) to the Gray Lodge entrance. Proceed through checking station (entrance fee) and continue to parking lot #14. We will caravan through Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, then visit other sites in Sutter, Butte and Glenn Counties. On Sunday, we will meet at 9 a.m. in the visitors' parking lot at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (entrance fee). To get there from I-5 take the Princeton exit just north of the Glenn Co. line, and follow signs to Refuge. Allow 2.5 hours driving time from the Bay Area. For accommodations, try Blue Gum Willows Motel, Best Western in Willows, Jean's Riverside B & B in Oroville, or other motels in Oroville, Willows or Chico. There is no lodge in Gray Lodge.

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## Birding in New York City

**May 2005**

A six-day trip to New York. For information call Alan Hopkins 415.664.0983



Contact Susan Groves, Field Trips Committee Chair, at 510.654.5954 or [susangroves@att.net](mailto:susangroves@att.net):

- if you can share a ride or if you need a ride,
- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

## key



**Carpool**

[\$]

**Entrance fee required**



**Biking trip**

# OBSERVATIONS

September 1-30, 2004  
Bruce Mast



**S**eptember brought our first fall rain, cooler weather, and shorter days. Migrant shorebirds flocked to Abbott's Lagoon and New Chicago Marsh, raptors rode thermals over Hawk Hill or flashed by in a blink, and vagrant warblers and other songbirds lured birders to the tree clumps on Outer Point Reyes.

## Loons to Ducks

A harbinger of winter, both Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*) and Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) turned up in the Bay Area. The former was spotted off of Pomponio SB, SM, on Sept 2nd (LM; ADM) while the latter was a fly-by sighting from Bodega Hcad, SON, on the 19th (CL). At PRNS, MRN, 6-8 Red-necked Grebes lingered Sept. 6-21 off of Drake's Beach and Limantour (RS; KH, KB, KL). Further offshore, a Sept. 17th pelagic trip to Bodega Cyn and Cordell Bank (SON/MRN) found a Laysan Albatross riding the wind (DS; mob). The same trip also discovered a Dark-rumped Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia/sandwichensis*) and a Streaked Shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*) (DS; mob). Throughout the month, seawatchers reported good numbers of Pink-footed, Buller's, and Sooty Shearwaters. Ashy Storm-Petrels were reported from the Sept 17th pelagic trip (DS). Two wandered into SF Bay, where they were spotted from Coyote Pt, SM, on the 24th (RST).

## Raptors to Alcids

Broad-winged Hawks were spotted over PRNS and Hawk Hill, MRN, on the 21st, 26th, and 30th (KH, SB; mob). Swainson's Hawks covered the same territory on the 4th, 21st, and 30th (TB, SB, BP; mob). In addition, a Swainson's was spied soaring over Milpitas, SCL, on the 5th (DWe). By mid-month, Ferruginous Hawk reports were coming in every few days from Hawk Hill and PRNS, MRN. A couple Prairie Falcons terrorized the shorebirds at Abbott's Lagoon (PRNS, MRN) through the 21st (RS; mob).

An unusually dull American Golden-Plover

was among the falcon bait at Abbott's Lagoon Sept 6-26 (DDS; mob). At Bodega Bay, SON, a juvenile American Golden-Plover spent the 6th at on the Doran mudflats (AW, RLe, DR). The same day, a Pacific Golden-Plover roosted at Shollenberger Park in Petaluma, SON (LH) and a Golden-Plover sp. visited Hayward RS, ALA, on the 26th (BR). Birders at Abbott's Lagoon found a Solitary Sandpiper on Sept 27th (WW); a Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) Sept. 4-8 (LL; mob); a Semipalmated Sandpiper Sept. 4-16 (LL; mob); and as many as 12 Baird's Sandpipers Sept. 6-25 (DDS; mob). Baird's Sandpipers were also noted at Bodega Bay, SON, on the 5th (FH) and at New Chicago Marsh, DENWR, SCL, on the 15th (DWe).

On Sept. 27th, two Sanderlings at L Hennessey, NAP, were just the second known county record (RL, MB, UW, JC). The season's first Pectoral Sandpiper arrived Sept. 1st at New Chicago Marsh, DENWR, SCL (mob). By the end of the month, they seemed to be everywhere. Also at New Chicago Marsh, the Stilt Sandpiper that arrived in mid-August remained through Sept. 18th (BRe, FV, DWe, DMa; mob). A Buff-breasted Sandpiper touched down at Abbott's Lagoon on Sept 4th. A second bird joined the fun on the 9th and both remained through the 20th (LL; mob). A pair of Ruffs remained all month in New Chicago Marsh (AE; mob), joined by a second male on the 8th (MRo). Ruffs also added to the scenery at Pescadero Marsh, SM, on the 2nd (ADM) and at Abbott's Lagoon Sept. 9-13 (MS; mob). Another highlight from Abbott's Lagoon was a Red Phalarope, seen on the 21st (KH, oob). Red-necked Phalaropes were commonly reported throughout the region along with a few Wilson's.

Jaegers were common off the coast this month. Most were Parasitics, with a few Pomarines mixed in. They invariably were observed harassing Elegant Terns and anything else that moved. A juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger lingered 4 days at Lagoon Valley

Res, SOL, beginning on the 5th (RM; JRo, CDL, JM, LK). Sabine's Gulls wandered inland to Mare Island, SOL, on the 13th (RM); to ALA Pt, ALA, on the 17th (JL); and to CCFS, SCL, on the 30th (FV, RR). Common Terns were sighted throughout the month at coastal and bayside locations. On the 13th, the tern of the day at Abbott's Lagoon was an Arctic Tern (EH). On the 21st, a Black Tern took top honors there (KH, oob). Most Black Skimmers remained concentrated in the South Bay but a few wandered out to MRN and SOL counties. On the 25th, a Cassin's Auklet made a rare bayside appearance at Coyote Pt, SM, on the 25th (RST). The Sept. 17 pelagic trip to Bodega Cyn and Cordell Bank logged a Xantus's Murrelet and a Tufted Puffin (DS)

## Doves to Thrashers

On Sept. 21st, PRBO Bird-a-thoners checked off a "very active" Barred Owl along the Bolinas-Fairfax Rd, MRN (KH, oob). Four days later, visitors to Butano SP, SM, heard a probable Long-eared Owl (FT, GrH, DSt). A MRN county backyard birder with 30+ hummingbird feeders was rewarded on the 25th with a Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Cynanthus latirostris*), a county record (ML; reported by MRu). Up on Mt. Davidson, SF, a female/immature Black-chinned Hummingbird was reported on the 10th and again on the 22nd (PS). A Least Flycatcher migrated through Lagoon Valley RP, SOL, on the 3rd (JL); another Least made it to the PRNS Lighthouse on the 21st (RS). Hammond's Flycatchers were reported from SF on the 1st (BF) and 25th (JRB; mob). A Tropical Kingbird visited Ano Nuevo SR, SM, on the 27th (GS).

Plumbeous Vireos passed through Outer PRNS, MRN, on the 5th (CL) and 29th (RS). A Red-eyed Vireo joined several tanagers at Strybing Arboretum in GGP, SF, on the 11th (JMa). Red-eyed Vireos were also reported from L Merced, SF, on the 27th and 28th (ADM) and from Nunes (A) Ranch, PRNS, MRN, on the 29th (RS). Vagrant chasers at Outer PRNS got two chances at Gray-checked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*), first on the 21st and again on the 28th (RS). A Gray Catbird remained along Pescadero Cr, SM, through the 15th, where it has lingered since mid-July (GH; WL, MLa, AE).

## Wood Warblers to Finches

As if the above mentioned sightings Abbott's Lagoon weren't enough, birders located a Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) on Sept. 7th and 8th (SJ; mob). Vagrant warblers were a hot item in September (see table). The most intriguing report, on the 26th, was a possible Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*), seen briefly at New Willows, in Outer PRNS (DN). On the 9th, a Green-tailed Towhee was seen along Mix Cyn Rd, SOL (RM). Sept. 16th and 17th, a Cassin's Sparrow (*Aimophila cassinii*) was found in Stinson Beach, MRN (KH, KB; mob). This would be the first MRN record. The season's first Clay-colored Sparrow returned to the SM coast just south of Half Moon Bay on the 3rd (RST). Careful observers noticed Brewer's Sparrows on the 7th at Outer PRNS (RS); on the 22nd at Sunnyvale Baylands Park, SCL (KP; MF); on the 24th at Coyote Pt. Yacht Club, SM (RST); and on the 26th along Coyote Cr at Henry Coe SP, SCL (MRo, GB). SM county produced 2 Vesper Sparrow sightings: on the 25th at the Coyote Pt. Yacht Club and on the 27th behind 258 Littlefield Ave in South SF (ADM).

Black-throated Sparrows were reported Sept 6th and 7th at the Albany mudflats, ALA (MaS), and Outer PRNS, MRN (RS). Also on the 6th, Outer PRNS hosted a Sage Sparrow and a Lark Bunting, both seen at the Lighthouse (CL). A Grasshopper Sparrow visited the Lighthouse on the 29th (RS). The season's first Lapland Longspur lingered 4 days at Berkeley's Caesar Chavez Park (ALA), where it was first seen on the 23rd (DW; mob).

On Sept 11th, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak joined a warbler/tanager flock feeding on Lerp Psyllids in a Livermore, ALA, Eucalyptus stand (AEd). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were regular backyard visitors in N Berkeley, ALA (LF) and Mill Valley, MRN (WiL). In SF, a Blue Grosbeak joined a goldfinch flock in GGP on the 18th (ASH) while a Dickcissel spent 4 days at Fort Mason (RB; mob). Three Bobolinks stopped at Abbott's Lagoon on the 16th (TK), at Bodega Head, SON, on the 21st (DH), and at the PRNS Lighthouse, also on the 21st (RS). Finally, an immature Yellow-headed Blackbird turned up in Campbell Cove at Bodega Bay on the 28th (DN).

## Wood Warbler Sightings

### Tennessee Warbler

9/20-22	Fort Mason, SF	KMK; KB
9/29	Mendoza Ranch, PRNS, MRN	RS

### Nashville Warbler

9/3	Lagoon Valley RP, SOL	JL
9/21	Sunnyvale WPCP, SCL	KP
9/22	Tilden RP, CC	JP
9/23	Guadalupe River Trail, SCL	AV
9/29	Drake's Beach, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/30	Marine Lab entrance, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Virginia's Warbler

9/10	Coyote Pt, SM	ADM
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### Northern Parula

9/10-27	John Muir Drive, SF	BF; mob
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### Chestnut-sided Warbler

9/4	Coyote Pt., SCL	RST
9/17	CCFS, SCL	SR
9/18	Pine Gulch Cr, Bolinas, MRN	DVP
9/29	Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/29	Drake's Beach, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/30	Owl Cyn, Bodega Bay, SON	AW; DN

### Magnolia Warbler

9/23	Princeton Harbor, SM	RST
9/26	Hayward RS, ALA	BR
9/28, 29	N L, GGP, SF	DM; mob
9/30	Marine Lab entrance, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Black-throated Blue Warbler

9/29	Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	RS
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### Black-throated Gray Warbler

9/20	Orinda Connector Trail, CC	MT
9/30	Campbell Cove, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Hermit Warbler

9/27	L Merced, SF	ADM
9/30	Marine Lab entrance, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Prairie Warbler

9/7	Hayward RS, ALA	BR
9/25	Randall Museum, Corona Heights Park, SF	JW; mob
9/29	New Willows, Outer PRNS, MRN	BL

### Palm Warbler

9/21	Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	RS
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### Bay-breasted Warbler

9/29	Nunes Ranch, PRNS, MRN	RS
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### Blackpoll Warbler

9/21	Fort Mason, SF	AW;
9/23	Hayward RS, ALA	BR
9/25	Fort Funston, SF	BF, ASH, HC
9/26, 27	John Muir Drive, SF	CDL, ADM
9/29	Nunes Ranch, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/29	Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/29	Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/30	Marine Lab entrance, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Black-and-white Warbler

9/4	Lighthouse, PRNS, MRN	BO
9/25, 26	John-Muir Dr., SF	mob
9/29	Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN	BL

### American Redstart

9/4	East Wash, Lincoln Park, SF	HC
9/21	Nunes Ranch, PRNS, MRN	RS
9/25, 26	New Willows, PRNS, MRN	CC; DN
9/30	Owl Cyn, Bodega Bay, SON	AW; DN
9/30	Campbell Cove, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### Prothonotary Warbler

9/26-30	258 Littlefield Ave, South SF, SM	RST, mob
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### Northern Waterthrush

9/11	Pescadero, SM	RST
9/18	Coyote Cr @ Hellyer Ave., SCL	MRo
9/28	48 Wharf Rd, Bolinas, MRN	KH
9/30	Marine Lab entrance, Bodega Bay, SON	DN

### MacGillivray's Warbler

9/21	Sunnyvale Baylands Park	MRo
9/23	Fort Mason, SF	FT

### Hooded Warbler

9/4-12	Gazos Cr, SM	GH; mob
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### Canada Warbler

9/30	Princeton Harbor, SM	RST
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### Yellow-breasted Chat

9/4	CCSF Banding Station, SCL	reported by MRo
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**Abbreviations for Observers:** DA, David Armstrong; BB, Bill Bousman; DB, Dennis Braddy; KB, Ken Burton; PB, Patricia Braddy; CC, Chris Conard; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; LC, Les Chibana; ADM, Al DeMartini; GD, Gary Deghi; JD, Jim Danzenbaker; AE, Al Eisner; MWE, Mark Eaton; BF, Brian Fitch; MF, Mike Feighner; RF, Rich Ferrick; RFi, RF, SG, Steve Glover; ASH, Alan Hopkins; GH, Garth Harwood; KH, Keith Hansen; LH, Lisa Hug; SH, Steve Huckabone; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; BL, Bill Lenarz; CL, Cindy Lieurance; CDL, Calvin Lou; DL, Don Lewis; JL, John Luther; LL, Les Lieurance; RL, Robin Leong; RLe, Rick Lebaudour; DM, Dan Murphy; JM, Joe Morlan; KMK, Kevin McKereghan; MM, Mike Mammoser; PM, Peter Metropulos; DN, Dan Nelson; BO, Becky Olsen; KO, Kris Olson; BP, Bob Power; JP, John Poole; KP, Kathy Parker; PP, Peter Pyle; BR, Bob Richmond; Bre, BRE; JR, Jean Richmond; MR, Mark Rauzon; MRo, Mike Rogers; SR, Steve Rottenborn; DS, David Suddjian; DSi, Dan Singer; ES, Emilie Strauss; ESe, Emily Serkin; PS, Paul Saraceni; RS, Rich Stallcup; RSc, Rusty Scalf; FT, Francis Toldi; MT, Marilyn Trabert; RST, Ron Thorn; MU, Myra Ulvang; AV, Ann Verdi; DVP, David Vander Pluym; FV, Frank Vanslager; AW, Alan Wight; AWi, Adam Winer; DW, Denise Wight; DWi, Dave Wimpfheimer; JW, Jim White; JY, James Yurchenco; MZ, Matt Zlatunich.

*Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation 'mob' = many observers. 'ooli' = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs, the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.*

**Abbreviations for Counties and Others** ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr, Creek, Cyn, Canyon; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; N, N; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; Pt, Point; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; ; RP, Regional Park; Rd, Road; Res, Reservoir; RS, Regional Shoreline; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

# BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



**T**he sight of a Golden Eagle soaring is exhilarating to most people. There is something majestic about all raptors. We forget that they are the top of their food chain and they are always hungry. Even when I witness a Peregrine Falcon cut like a knife through a flock of shorebirds at amazing speed, plucking one bird from many, I seem to remain psychologically removed. It is done so precisely and is such a beautiful display of physical prowess that I am in admiration of the deed.

On the other hand, I reacted with feelings of revulsion after reading about a raptor-related event witnessed on Yellowstone Lake last May. It was reported in *Yellowstone Science* magazine by a Yellowstone National Park ornithologist. It was a morbidly fascinating tale of the predation of a flock of Western Eared Grebes by ravens.

On May 1, the grebes, which don't spend much time in Yellowstone, passed overhead en route north for the summer. Terry McEneaney was at the frozen lake looking for bald eagle nesting sites. He noticed a grebe sitting on the frozen water. Shifting cloud shadows had fooled the bird into thinking it was open water not ice. Like most flocking birds one bird was followed by many. Grebes need open water for take-off so once they had landed, they were stranded on the frozen lake.

Dum-da-dum-dum! In short order, a raven arrived and pulverized a grebe with its long beak. The raven left the grebe where it lay, then moved to another and pecked it to death as well. A male raven can weigh nearly four pounds, a female two-and-a-half pounds, so an 11-ounce grebe is an easy mark. Within 20 minutes, three more ravens showed up and joined in the carnage. Then two bald eagles appeared and began feasting on the grebes the ravens had killed. After the ravens had killed 92 birds they began dismantling the carcasses and caching the

grebe meat in the snow. This is what ravens do when there is an abundance of food—hide it for the future when food is scarce.

The predation took place over a period of hours and resulted in the deaths of all 141 grebes. Having studied ravens for nearly 20 years, McEneaney knew of their predatory nature but found it amazing that they could have done so much damage in one



Raven

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

day. Yellowstone Park regulations require that Mother Nature be allowed to take its course, so McEneaney never considered trying to intervene.

It reminds me of the time our family was at Samburu Park in Kenya and watched two cheetahs hunting. From afar, it was thrilling to see the cunning and the speed of the cheetahs. But then our driver took us very near them as they dispatched the impala. Since cheetahs are the smallest of the cats, they have a hard time bringing an animal down and must smother it by covering its nose with their mouths or biting the jugular vein. They must also eat fast before the other animals steal their meal. So it became a rather agonizing struggle. It definitely was not like watching it on television! It was nature at its most intense.

To refresh your memory, ravens are the largest member of the large crow family,

which includes jays, magpies and nutcrackers. They are marvelous fliers. You name it and they can do it: hover, soar, dive, tumble or hold a position in a gale. In courtship, the male and female fly side by side with wing tips touching. And they mate for life. They are quite tame around humans, but are very wary where they are hunted and over most of their range. They seem to be able to survive just about anywhere, from the treeless tundra to seacoasts, banks of rivers, forest, plains and deserts.

In all native American tribes, the raven was both admired for its intelligence and cunning and feared as a harbinger of bad tidings. Ravens are resourceful: they have been observed using tools—for example, dropping rocks on shellfish to break them open. They are quick to learn and to profit from experience. The crow family is capable of solving puzzles, can imitate other birds and animals and can learn to imitate the human voice. They even have a language of their own. As scavengers, ravens will eat just about everything protein including eggs, fish, dead animals, worms and insects along with berries in the fall. They compete with vultures and gulls for all sorts of food, dead or alive. In captivity they have lived almost 25 years.

Ravens must be exceedingly successful as there are 103 species worldwide. And their numbers appear to me to be increasing in our suburban and urban areas where they began appearing in recent years. Thank goodness they only have one brood a year! They usually rear four to six young in their very bulky, very messy nests. You may hear them before you see them as they blurt out their rather obnoxious "CRU-UCK!" It's very different from the mere "Caw-Caw" of crows. When flying, the raven has a wedge-shaped tail as opposed to the squared off tail of the crow. Crows also tend to flock while ravens appear in small groups of three or less.

Even though the spectacle witnessed in Yellowstone is chilling, it is truly survival of the fittest. We seldom see it in action but it's happening every moment in nature. Ravens have a place in the grand scheme of things along with other predators. And they are fascinating birds to study and to watch. And, it seems, that could be just about anywhere.

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#### BIRD COUNT, continued from page 1

north of San Francisco International Airport. Also providing a wide variety of habitats, the San Francisco count generally records upwards of 160 species. Both counts have ranked among the top 25 nationwide in terms of numbers of species found.

"The key to finding a large number of species, of course, is having a large number of participants," says Dave. "Participants can search for birds from dawn to dusk – or longer if you want to look for owls. If time is limited, people can still help by spending just a few hours tallying birds in a neighborhood park or near their work place. Field observers will be guided by an experienced area leader and assigned to an area suited to their interests and ability. Yard watchers who bird at home are also wanted, as some species are often easier to find this way."

Golden Gate Audubon's two Christmas Counts are a popular tradition. Oakland usually attracts more than 150 field observers and San Francisco, more than 80.

Both bird counts finish the day with a festive group dinner, to which everyone is invited: field bird-counters, yard-watchers and anyone who wants to join in the fun. "These inexpensive, hearty dinners are a wonderful way to share stories about your day in the field, tally final counts of birds seen and missed, and exchange information about rare birds and their locations," says Dave.

Golden Gate Audubon Hospitality Chair Susanne Shields will plan and serve the dinners again this year. Working in partnership with Project Open Hand, another non-profit, Susanne promises plenty of good,

hot, nutritious food, ensuring that everyone goes home full of wonderful food and memories of a delightful day.

#### How to Get Involved

Are you ready to count? If you would like to sign up and need an invitation, please call the Golden Gate Audubon office (510.843.2222) to request one, or sign up on-line at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org) (see "Christmas Bird Count" under the "Birding" section). For further information, please call Dave Quady (510.704.9353) or Bob Lewis (510.845.5001) for the Oakland count or Alan Hopkins (415.664.0983) for the San Francisco Count.

Volunteers willing to help collect money, serve, set up and clean up at the dinners are also greatly appreciated. Please call Susanne at 415.810.4900 if you would like to help.

Lacy, of LSA Associates, developed the survey protocol and helped train the youths in observing and identifying wildlife, giving them a sound introduction to field biology. The third Saturday of each month the youths went on field trips to sites such as Pescadero Marsh, Audubon Canyon Ranch, Petaluma Marsh and the Bay Aquarium.

We discovered a wildlife paradise in urban San Francisco. We observed 148 total species, including 118 bird species. Golden Gate Audubon member Alan Hopkins, who has been birding Candlestick Point Recreation Area for many years, also added another 36 bird species from previous years' observations. And on a preliminary scouting expedition, leaders observed sea lions hauling themselves out in the South Basin, bringing the total number of species to 185.

The maximum number of birds observed in a single day was 2,347 individuals in January 2004. Of 29 surveys conducted, total bird numbers exceeded 2,000 on five survey days. On 17 surveys, bird numbers were between

1,000 and 2,000. High individual species numbers on one-day counts included 646 Greater Scaup, 510 Ruddy Ducks and 267 Surf Scoters, 358 Western Sandpipers, and 245 Least Sandpipers. Fifty-seven landbird species were observed; high one-day numbers include 146 Western Meadowlarks, 86 Red-winged Blackbirds, 45 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 175 White-crowned Sparrows, and 8 Red-tailed Hawks.

Only one amphibian species—the California Slender Salamander—was found, but in large numbers (43 in one day). Five reptile species were observed, including the Southern Alligator Lizard and Ring-Necked Snake (very small and beautiful). A surprising 14 butterfly species were identified.

We also held several public meetings to inform the Bayview community of our progress. Some of the youths made excellent presentations at these events. I felt honored to know these young people.

When we discovered that PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls, potential carcinogens) were polluting the Bay muds in Yosemite

Slough and South Basin, we asked the youths if they wanted to continue the project. All responded with a strong yes! But they said, "We have to tell the community, and we need signs along the shoreline telling people not to play in or eat fish from these waters." The youths took their message to city officials and helped set up community meetings. As a result, the project continued, and warning signs appeared along the shoreline.

Golden Gate Audubon extends our thanks and appreciation to the following students who took part in our project: Erica Andrews, Michquinell Buckner, Cerina Byrd, Ursula Choice, Stanley Elder, Carol Hou, Liz Ibarra, Luz Ibarra, Kevin James, Justin King, Melinda Kouch, Lilian Largaespada, Sam Lui, Sophia Mak, Tony Marks-Block, Jasmine Marshall, Claudia Nelson, Mayra Palomino, John Peng, Lynnecka Resse, John Solomen, Gladys Vichez, Gary Wen, Kenny Wong, Wing Wong, Henry Ye. Congratulations on a job well done. It was a joy to work with you.

By Arthur Feinstein  
Conservation Director

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

*The GULL* is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The GULL*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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